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AUTHOR Mirando, Joseph A.

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ABSTRACT

The first class of journalism students ever assembled at a college or university enrolled at Washington College (now Washington and Lee University) in 1869-70. Studying Washington College's efforts shows that much of the promise and the shortcomings of this discipline were clearly evident more than 125 years ago. During the 1700s and 1800s the typical college curriculum was restricted to the liberal arts, and studies took place in an atmosphere similar to an academy or boarding school, reflecting British roots. The common way to learn journalism was to apprentice in a print shop, in the tradition of Benjamin Franklin. A proposal was made in 1834 for a formal school of journalism, to be called "The Washington Institute," with the intention of raising journalistic standards in the United States. During the later 19th century American higher education changed rapidly to imitate the admired German model, where lessons were based on systematic methods of inquiry and the university was viewed as a laboratory designed to develop experts and scholars. In 1862 the Morrill Land Grant Act helped establish colleges that would offer teaching specifically in fields of a practical and industrial nature--colleges were encouraged to revise their curricula. Robert E. Lee was Washington College's president when journalism education began there. He organized a committee to plan for journalism education, met with the trustees to make his case, and arranged for and advertised scholarships. After Lee's death in 1870, the program was discontinued. Though no official reason was given, the program ended probably because of constant attacks by the press. (Contains 60 notes.) (NKA)

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THE FIRST COLLEGE JOURNALISM STUDENTS: ANSWERING ROBERT E. LEE'S OFFER OF A HIGHER EDUCATION

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By Joseph A. Mirando, Ph.D.
Southeastern Louisiana University
SLU 428
Hammond, LA 70402
office: (504)549-3374
home: (504)386-8583
Fax: (504)549-5014
E-Mail: FENG1678@SELU.EDU

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THE FIRST COLLEGE JOURNALISM STUDENTS: ANSWERING ROBERT E. LEE'S OFFER OF A HIGHER EDUCATION

Introduction

The recently-completed academic year of 1994-95 marked the passing of a milestone in the history of journalism and mass communication education. It was exactly 125 years ago, during the term of 1869-1870, that the first class of journalism students ever assembled at a college or university in America enrolled at Washington College, now known as Washington and Lee University, in Lexington, Va.

The anniversary passed largely unnoticed by both the press and academia because other events are more often commemorated as the beginning of journalism education in America, such as the founding of the University of Missouri School of Journalism in 1908 or Joseph Pulitzer's $2 million endowment to create a journalism school at Columbia University in 1904. Missouri is usually referred to as the first ever school of journalism because it was set up as an administrative unit separate from any other unit or division on the same campus and equal in rank to the university's schools or colleges of law, medicine or education.[1] Columbia's journalism school endowed by Pulitzer did not open its doors until 1912, but the size of the endowment (which was the equivalent of more than $200 million in 1995 dollars) created widespread discussion on journalism education. Pulitzer drew even more attention when he wrote an article explaining his support of journalism education.[2] Other events often cited as the

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[1]Earl English, Journalism Education at the University of Missouri-Columbia (Marceline, Mo.: Walsworth, 1988), pp. 2-4.

[2]Joseph Pulitzer, "The College of Journalism," North American Review, May 1904, pp. 641-680. For a more modern view of the effect of Pulitzer's endowment, see James W. Carey's presidential address to the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, "A Plea for the University Tradition," Journalism Quarterly, 55 (Winter 1978), 846-855.

beginning of journalism education are the founding of the University of Pennsylvania's journalism curriculum in 1893 and the establishment of the University of Illinois' journalism curriculum in 1904.[3]

Washington and Lee's place in the history of journalism education is hardly prominent today. No mention of it is present in such leading modern journalism history textbooks as The Press and America by Michael and Edwin Emery, The Media in America by Wm. David Sloan, James G. Stovall and James D. Startt, and Voices of a Nation by Jean Folkerts and Dwight L. Teeter. Recent widely-acclaimed studies of the history of journalism education portray Washington and Lee's contribution to journalism education as little more than an oddity. A 1987 Journalism Monograph focusing on the history of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication refers to it as "an effort to establish training in printing."[4] An edition of Gannett Center Journal, now known as Media Studies Journal, was devoted to "The Making of Journalists" and used the qualifying phrase "formal origins of journalism education" to describe Washington and Lee's efforts as being distinguished from printshop apprenticeships.[5] In a 1990 book of biographies of noted journalism educators, Sloan referred to it as an effort "Emphasizing printing as an adjunct to the classics."[6]

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[3]A modern popular journalism history textbook, The Press and America, 7th ed. by Michael Emery and Edwin Emery (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1992), p. 517, refers to Pennsylvania as having the "first definitely organized curriculum in journalism" and Illinois as offering the "first four-year curriculum in journalism."

[4]Edwin Emery and Joseph P. McKerns, "AEJMC: 75 Years in the Making," Journalism Monographs no. 104 (November 1987), 2.

[5]Everette E. Dennis, "Whatever Happened to Marse Robert's Dream?" Gannett Center Journal 2 (Spring 1988), 10.

[6]Wm. David Sloan, ed. Makers of the Media Mind (Hillsdale, N.J. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1990), 3.

To neglect the events that occurred in 1869-70 at Washington College as well as key events leading up to that academic year is to overlook an important piece of history. Today, journalism and mass communication is a firmly-established academic discipline offered by colleges and universities across the nation. Studying Washington College's efforts would yield a better understanding of journalism and mass communication education because much of the promise and the shortcomings of this discipline were clearly evident 125 years ago when a class of college journalism students met for the first time.

Journalism Education's Pre-History

The structure of both the media and higher education in the United States made classroom-oriented learning in journalism appear to be of little value during the 1700s and most of the 1800s.

Preparation for the ministry was the most common goal of any student who had a career motive in attending college in early America. The typical college curriculum was restricted to the liberal arts, and studies took place in an atmosphere similar to an academy or a boarding school, reflecting its British roots. In this setting, the ancient Greek education theory that gaining knowledge was simply good within itself prevailed. Some of the primary values educators hoped to pass on to their students were not as much concerned with gaining expertise as they were with overall notions of morality, refinement, maturity and respectability. The possibility that America could benefit from editors concentrating on these kinds of values instead of journalistic method motivated John Ward Fenno to make one of the earliest known statements of support for college training for journalists in 1799:

> The newspapers of America are admirably calculated to keep the country in a continued state of insurrection and revolution. And if it ever again settles into quietude,

> it will not be till their influence is counteracted. The ultimate tendency of their labours, in their now general direction, appears marked in characters as strong and clear as they are formidable and alarming.
>
> I have not the vanity to recommend any preservative, but I cannot concede the propriety of requiring some qualifications and pledges from men on whom the nation depends for all the information and much of the instruction it receives. To well-regulated colleges we naturally look for a source whence such qualifications might in proper form be derived; . . .[7]

John Ward Fenno was far ahead of his time. His father, John Fenno, the founder of the Gazette of the United States, was a former schoolteacher, unlike his contemporaries who usually became editors only after service as a printer's devil.[8] But the Fennos were an exception because the typical way to learn about journalism in early America was to gain an apprenticeship in a print shop. It was a tradition that was centuries old that could be traced back to the famous German printer Johann Gutenberg and reaffirmed by the printing apprentice backgrounds of such noted early American journalists as Benjamin Franklin and Isaiah Thomas.

Most early American journalists were printer/journalists, and this factor did much to shape the direction of journalism education. The most overt expression of this influence is the vocabulary of journalists; the names of many of the writing forms and methods that were to form the bases of lessons originated from printing terms, such as scoop, slug, sidebar, headline and byline. These terms gave journalism strong identification as a trade rather than a profession, and such an identity was supported by a perceived need for an apprenticeship period, the allowing of time and space to dictate how much or how little could be published, and various assembly-line tactics that characterized the work of printers. Trade values conflicted with the traditional values of the academy, but they were state of the art at the time in journalism and thus

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[7]Gazette of the United States (Philadelphia), 4 March 1799.

[8]Emery and Emery, 62-63.

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deserving of a prominent place in a journalistic education.

In 1834, Duff Green, editor of the United States Telegraph, put together a proposal for what would have amounted to be the earliest known formal school of journalism, which was to be called The Washington Institute. Green intended to establish a "manual labor school" which would enroll about two hundred boys between the ages of eleven and fourteen. The boys were to work eight hours a day in the Telegraph print shop and devote five hours a day to classes in language, arts and sciences. The ultimate benefit of the school, according to Green, would be to raise the standards of the press in America. Graduates of the school who learned their lessons well would be intelligent individuals who would be too ethical to allow their printing presses to be used as a tool of partisan politics, Green argued.

However, local Washington printers who formed the Columbia Typographical Society pointed out a more nefarious scheme behind The Washington Institute. Green's plan to raise the standards of journalism also included paying students for working in his print shop at a rate far below what a journeyman printer earned, eventually creating a larger pool of printers who would be forced to accept lower wages or pursue another line of work. Printers reacted by refusing to work for Green, cutting off the skilled labor he needed to support his own newspaper, which was widely known for its partisan politics. By late 1834 Green was forced to abandon his proposal for The Washington Institute before it could be put into action to save his own business.[9]

During the second half of the nineteenth century American higher education changed rapidly. It was a time in which the German university was very much admired and studied by

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[9]Arthur J. Kaul, "The Washington Institute: Printers and the Radicalization of an Urban Labor Network," paper presented at the Social Science History Association annual meeting, Chicago, 3-6 November 1988, 15.

American educators. In the Germanic model of higher education, lessons were based on systematic methods of inquiry and the university was viewed as a laboratory designed to develop experts and scholars.

At the same time the growing industrial revolution profoundly affected America. And despite liberal education ideals that conflicted with the mechanized movement, institutions of higher education came to embrace the industrial revolution after the Morrill Land Grant Act was passed in 1862. The Act provided thousands of acres of land for the establishing of colleges that would offer teaching specifically in fields of a practical and industrial nature. As education historian Laurence R. Veysey noted, colleges then took on a new role more concerned with a utilitarian function in society. This new role encouraged colleges to revise their curricula, organize specialized departments of knowledge, and thus take the lead in helping to industrialize society.[10]

Thus, the conditions of the middle and late 1800s made the time ripe for journalism education. In 1856, a year before Congressman Justin Smith Morrill of Vermont introduced his land grant bill, George Lunt, a former U.S. attorney for the District of Massachusetts, suggested the press could be improved with "a college, or a commission established, to settle upon a firmer and fairer basis the theory of editorial qualifications . . . ."[11] In 1857 the board of

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[10]Laurence R. Veysey, The Emergence of the American University (Chicago: University Press, 1965), 142. Note: A strong discussion of Veysey's argument in relation to journalism in higher education is contained in Douglas Birkhead and James W. Carey, "Journalism Education and the Structure of the American University," paper presented to the annual convention of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Corvallis, Oreg., 6-9 August 1983, 13.

[11]George Lunt, Three Eras of New England (Boston: n.p., 1857), 107; quoted in Hazel Dicken-Garcia, Journalistic Standards in Nineteenth-Century America (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1989), p. 218.

directors of Pennsylvania State University proposed adding journalism to its curriculum to the state legislature.[12] In 1864 a prominent magazine, The Independent, printed an anonymous letter to the editor that called for a "College for the Training of Editors." The letter writer alluded to the land grant act in arguing that if schools for lawyers, doctors, ministers, and farmers were justified, so were journalism schools.[13] In 1869 Norman J. Coleman, a St. Louis journalist who would later become the nation's first secretary of agriculture, proposed offering study in journalism at the University of Missouri.[14]

Journalism at Washington College

Under the leadership of Robert E. Lee, Washington College came to embrace recent developments in higher education and built a reputation as a bold innovator.

In late August 1865 Lee was offered the position of president of Washington College. Less than five months before at Appomattox Court House, Va., he had surrendered as commanding general of the Army of Northern Virginia, and just six weeks after his defeat the last of the rebel troops surrendered to end the Civil War.

Lee accepted the job primarily because it gave him the opportunity to play a major role in helping to rebuild the South.[15] At the time Lee was under indictment for treason to the

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[12]De Forest O'Dell, "The History of Journalism Education in the United States," Contributions to Education, no. 653 (New York: Columbia University, 1935), 1.

[13]"A College for the Training of Editors," The Independent 9 June 1864, repr. 15 June 1914, 480.

[14]William H. Taft, "Establishing the School of Journalism," Missouri Historical Review, 84 (October 1989), 63.

[15]Lee's personal correspondence during this period thoroughly supports this argument. Strong discussions of this point are present in leading biographies of Lee. See Douglas Southall Freeman, R.E. Lee: A Biography , vol. 4 (New York: Scribner's, 1935), 420-432 or Charles Bracelen Flood, Lee: The Last Years (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1981), 87-102.

United States for his service to the Confederacy, he was living in a borrowed tenant farmer's house, both he and his wife were in bad health, and he was barred from the military profession in which he had spent the past 35 years of his life. On the other hand, he was receiving lucrative offers, including a job as a figurehead president of an insurance company for six times the salary he was given by Washington College.[16] Lee could have even extended the war; a simple suggestion from Lee would have furnished enough encouragement to many Confederate soldiers to carry on a guerrilla struggle for years. But Lee not only rejected this option, he made it a standard policy to encourage former rebels to accept amnesty and swear the controversial oath of allegiance to the United States despite the federal government's refusal to accept Lee's personal oath.[17]

Lee was a supporter of the classics and praised students' work in areas such as latin and philosophy. But he saw that the best way he could help students begin the job of rebuilding the South was to give them opportunities to develop specific skills. Communities across the South were devastated by the war, and their recovery would be very much dependent on a variety of competently-trained professionals. "The importance of a more practical course of instruction in our schools and colleges," he wrote, "which, while it may call forth the genius and

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[16]Flood, 108.

[17]Union General George Meade visited Lee in Richmond in May 1865 and asked Lee to take the oath. Lee told him he might take the oath, but not until it was clear to him what the federal government's intentions were. Later President Andrew Johnson announced the government's official policy that "clemency will be liberally extended" to all those who take the oath or ask for pardons. Lee asked Johnson for a pardon and began encouraging others to do likewise, but Johnson never replied to Lee's pardon application. On October 2, the same day he officially accepted the job as president of Washington College, Lee signed the oath of allegiance to the United States and had it sent to Washington. However, no government official ever acknowledged receiving it, and it was not found until 1970 in a bundle of papers in the National Archives. In 1975 Lee's citizenship was restored posthumously by an act of Congress. See Flood, 53, 60, 63 and 99-100.

energies of our people, will tend to develop the resources and promote the interests of the country."[18]

During the first three years of Lee's administration nearly every phase of life at Washington College was re-directed and re-organized. The faculty, which consisted of just four members at the end of the war, was now more than triple in size. Enrollment, which was about 50 when Lee was inaugurated, had swelled to more than 400. In autumn 1865 the school was near bankruptcy, but Lee's fund-raising helped build an endowment of $225,000 to keep it alive. During the war the college was limited to teaching primarily Greek, latin, mathematics and natural philosophy, but between 1865 and 1868 the curriculum changed radically with Lee's emphasis on practical education. An elective system was introduced, and science offerings and engineering studies were expanded.

The first official action toward establishing journalism education came when Lee met with the college's trustees in June 1868 to review the progress made during the course of the third year of his presidency. Satisfied with the direction the college was taking, the trustees authorized the faculty to begin planning extensions of the college's "scientific and practical departments."[19] The faculty organized a committee under the supervision of Lee to work on the planning, and Lee and the faculty held meetings during the 1868-69 school year to discuss their work. "The great object of the whole plan," Lee wrote, "is to provide the facilties required by the large class of our young men, who, looking to an early entrance into the practical pursuits of life, need a more direct training to this end than the usual literary courses. The proposed

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[18]Freeman, 421, quoting Lee letter to unnamed correspondent, 18 January 1867.

[19]Lee used these specific words in referring to the proposed new divisions of the college. R.E. Lee letter to the finance committee of Washington College, 8 January 1869, repr. in 1869-70 Catalogue of Washington College, appendix, p. 64.

departments will also derive great advantage from the literary schools of the college, whose influence in the cultivation and enlargement of the mind is felt beyond their immediate limits."[20]

At one of these meetings held on March 12, 1869, professor William Preston Johnston presented his report which was to make journalism education history. As a part of the plan, Johnston called on the trustees to offer scholarships to students who "propose to make printing and journalism their profession."[21] Johnston's report included the following three resolutions which were unanimously adopted by Lee and seven other faculty members present at the meeting:

> Resolved: That the Board of Trustees be required to authorize the faculty to appoint to scholarships, to be called the _____ Scholarships, not exceeding fifty in number, young men intending to make practical printing and journalism their business in life, such scholarships to be free from tuition and college fees, on condition that when required by the faculty they shall perform such disciplinary duties as may be assigned them in a printing office or in other positions in the line of their profession, for a time equal to one hour in each working day.
>
> Resolved: That the Board of Trustees be requested in order to carry the foregoing provision into effect, to make such arrangements for or with a Printing Office as may afford practical instruction and so far as practicable compensated employment in their business to such young men.
>
> Resolved: That the Board of Trustees be requested to authorize the faculty to contract for advertising to an amount not to exceed $5,000, said advertising to be paid for in tuition.[22]

Lee was anxious to have the journalism scholarships and other plans submitted for approval in time to be printed in the 1869-70 catalog, so he proposed them to the trustees at a

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[20]Freeman, quoting 1868-69 Catalogue of Washington College , p. 57.

[21]Records (Minutes) of Faculty Washington College, vol. 2 (Sept. 16, 1867-Oct. 11, 1870), p. 113.

[22]Ibid. Note that the exact name of the scholarships was left blank purposely by the recording secretary of the meeting, E. C. Gordon. The word "press" was later inserted after the proposal was approved by the trustees.

meeting on March 30, 1869 rather than wait for his regular annual review meeting in June. Lee presented Johnston's exact proposal to the trustees, with the following appendix to explain the faculty's reasons for submitting the proposal:

> It is respectfully suggested that in the two fold aspect of benefit to the public and to the college, it seems a desirable plan. The public benefits, which it is hoped may result, are first to the individuals proposed as beneficiaries; but far more in both the direct and the indirect influence for good of a body of men educated to the culture and tone proposed for our students, distributed among the newspaper offices of the United States, and by their example and aims, elevating the standards of journalism.
>
> The advantage to the college will be the recognition and appreciation by the press of this mitiatory step for the benefit of that great public interest and its hearty cooperation in the great work of education.
>
> The second resolution recommending an arrangement for or with a printing office to train these young men is intended, as it purports, to give them the proper mechanical training while here, and in some measure to reimburse the college for the expenses of their education. If any surplus accrues beyond this, it should pass to the students' account. It is thought that such a printing office, with cheap labor, might not only do the college printing, but might obtain a large amount of job printing under proper and energetic management, whether in the hands of the college or of a third party, it should prove remunerative. Thus conducted, it would be a practical school of workmanship to the scholars and might also by its facilities for employment enable them to pay their board and other expenses.[23]

The trustees decided to approve the scholarships and the plan to advertise them, but they were concerned about the feasibility of finding a suitable print shop to serve as a third party and requested the faculty to make arrangements with a printer outside the college. At a June 21, 1869 meeting the faculty approved a resolution calling for the recipients of the press scholarships to work at no cost to the college in the employ of Major John J. Lafferty, publisher of Lexington's local weekly newspaper, the Virginia Gazette.[24] Lafferty had agreed to be a part of the plan, and the trustees approved the arrangements with Lafferty & Company at a meeting two days later.

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[23]Lee letter to the Board of Trustees, 30 March 1869.

[24]Records (Minutes) of Faculty, Washington College, vol. 2 (Sept. 16, 1867-Oct. 11, 1870), p. 150.

Lafferty was later appointed "Superintendent of Instruction in Typography and Stenography," thus in effect becoming the first ever journalism educator.[25]

Lee is often credited with developing the whole proposal. Nearly a half-century later the president of the American Association of Teachers of Journalism, the predecessor of the modern Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, would write an account of an interview Lee gave to a New York newspaper reporter on the porch of his home one afternoon in Lexington. Lee was reported to use the interview to ask the reporter questions about the press and its influence and told the journalist, "War is over, but the South has a still greater conflict before her. We must do something to train her new recruits to fight her battles, not with the sword, but with the pen."[26]

However, no clear evidence exists to show that Lee was the sole author of the proposal. Noted Lee biographer Douglas Southall Freeman speculates that it is far more likely that professor Johnston developed the idea.[27] Johnston exhibited an interest in public affairs and was a professor of history and English literature, and Lee's involvement in the idea may have been limited to simply endorsing the proposal. It must be pointed out that a key to the success of Lee as a military leader and as an educational leader was Lee's willingness to consider all options available and to allow his officers and his professors to present new ideas without fear. Lee's

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[25]Stenography referred to non-printing journalistic skills, such as reporting. According to a 1920s monograph by a Washington and Lee journalism professor, this title was intended to describe a teacher of "Make-Up, Head Writing and Reporting." See Roscoe Ellard, "General Lee and Journalism," Washington and Lee University Bulletin, June 1, 1926, 7. It must also be noted that Lafferty appeared in the 1869-70 college catalogue as "Instructor of Stenography."

[26]James Melvin Lee, "Genesis of Journalism Teaching," Editor & Publisher, May 13, 1916, p. 1563. The accuracy of this article is questionable. It must be noted that when a New York Sun reporter visited the college in 1869, he spoke to professor Johnston, not Lee.

[27]Freeman, 429-430.

biographers point out that Lee was a diligent, hard worker; according to one professor, "He audited every account; he presided at every faculty meeting; studied and signed every report."[28] That the proposal developed under Lee's leadership was a strength according to another former president of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Everette Dennis—"Journalism education could not have had a more elegant and eloquent advocate than Lee."[29]

On August 19, 1869, flyers containing details on the press scholarships were mailed to tyopographical unions and journalists across the South, and similar advertisements were sent to newspapers. The contents of the flyer (referred to as a circular by the college) consisted of an announcement of the scholarships, the terms applicants would need to fulfill (to be above the age of 15, to be of unimpeachable character and to work in a printshop one hour a day when required) and the conditions of the scholarships (all tuition and college fees free for up to two years).[30]

The scholarships were later limited to 25 students, half to be nominated by typographical unions and the other half nominated by editorial associations. True to Lee's mission to rebuild the South, the unions and associations had to be based in Southern states.[31] The scholarships covered all tuition and fees, an expense that amounted to about $100 per year; however, the scholarship did not cover lodging and meals, which ranged from about $17 to $25 per month.

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[28]Flood, 106, quoting Thomas Nelson Page, Robert E. Lee: Man and Soldier (New York: Scribner's, 1911), 661.

[29]Dennis, 11.

[30]Augustus Maverick, Henry J. Raymond and The New York Press for Thirty Years Hartford, Conn.: A.S. Hale, 1870), 355-356.

[31]"Press Scholarships," Southern Collegian, 9 October 1869, p. 1.

because the college did not exercise control over boarding arrangements.[32] Typographical unions were encouraged to give their nominees additional money to help them pay for their board.

During the first year of the existence of the program, five students were confirmed by the faculty to receive scholarships, and in 1870, seven appointments were made.[33]

The Virginia Gazette, at a time before Lafferty was appointed to his superintendent position, expressed surprise upon receiving the Washington College catalogue and seeing the scholarships but also exhibited approval. "Should the idea of the trustees be carried into operation," according to the newspaper, "opportunity will be afforded young men who propose to enter printing offices, of acquiring not simply a plain education in elementary studies, but of securing accurate and extensive scholarship, which will not only be of great service to them in their business life, but must also be of incalculable advantage to the country, in thus securing a large proportion of highly educated men in the printing offices all over the land."[34] After Lafferty & Co. was confirmed as the designated printshop for the program, the Virginia Gazette had even more praise: "This is the first distinct recognition ever made by the so-called centres of wisdom of the true dignity of the press. It acknowledges its importance on the weal and love of the country; and shows a wish to aid in its elevation by the education of those who are to serve in its ranks. . . . We hope to see a fuller exposition of the value of this scheme and of its capabilities for good. To us it seems to lay the foundation on which may rise a superstructure

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[32]Ibid.

[33]William W. Pusey III, The Interrupted Dream: The Educational Program at Washington College (Washington and Lee University) 1850-1880 (Lexington: Liberty Hall Press, 1976), 54.

[34]Virginia Gazette, 2 June 1869, p. 2.

honourable to the architects and glorious to the country."[35]

Lee died on October 12, 1870, and later that year the school changed its name to Washington and Lee University. Meanwhile the program to award journalism scholarships appears to have also died soon afterward. By 1871, only five of the students who had been nominated for scholarships still appeared on the roster of students enrolled at the college, and no reference was made to whether they still held the scholarships or if any new students had been awarded scholarships.[36] Throughout 1869-70 the Virginia Gazette had a weekly advertisement of the scholarships, but the ad stopped appearing on September 16, 1870. A notice about the proposed expansion of scientific and practical departments appeared for the last time in the catalogue's1873-74 edition, and the scholarships stopped appearing in the catalogue after 1878. According to Ollinger Crenshaw, a noted expert on the history of the school, "Gradually, in the declining seventies, journalism at Washington and Lee was quietly dropped."[37]

Though no official reason for discontinuing the program was ever given, constant attacks by the press probably played a role in the demise of the program.

Though the program was set up to offer 50 scholarships, according to professor Johnston the number had been cut to 25 because Washington College had become "rather abashed at the torrent of ridicule poured on us by some of the papers of the country."[38] Newspapers such as the Louisville Courier-Journal and Charleston News blended criticism, sarcasm and denunciation in

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[35]Virginia Gazette, 17, November 1869, p. 2.

[36]Pusey, 54.

[37]Ollinger Crenshaw, General Lee's College, unpublished typescript, vol. 1, fall 1973, p. 619.

[38]"General Lee's College," New York Sun, repr. Virginia Gazette, 17 November 1869, p. 1.

their published reports on the program."[39] The Southern Collegian, Washington College's campus newspaper, pleaded with the press to give the journalism program a chance. "If our friends of the press who have tittered, would cease their tittering, and look to the true interests and honor of their noble profession, we are convinced they would appreciate at least the motives and objects of this college in establishing the journalistic scholarships."[40] It was to no avail. Augustus Maverick, biographer of Henry Raymond of the New York Times, summed up the feelings of many journalists at the time when he called the flyer announcing the scholarships "a curious document" and noted that "the newspapers became facetious over a programme which was inherently absurd."[41] And journalists' views toward Washington and Lee or journalism education were not going to change anytime soon. In 1875 Charles F. Wingate put together a book which profiled twenty-seven leading journalists of this period, and not one of the journalists who addressed a question on the viability of college journalism education would support the idea.

What particularly riled journalists was the perception that Washington College was setting up an endowed chair of journalism and that students would receive all the training and skills necessary so that they would be ready to become editors immediately upon graduation. Not only was this a controversial idea, but it came to be seen as an outright insult to journalists who had spent years toiling in printshops to develop their journalistic abilities. Associated Press dispatches sent out to newspapers in October 1869 allowed skeptics to draw this

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[39]The campus paper attacked these two papers in particular for mocking the program. See "Washington College and the Newspapers," Southern Collegian, 9 October 1869, p. 1.

[40]"A Propos(sic) of the Journalistic Scholarships," Southern Collegian, 23 October 1869, p. 2.

[41]Maverick, 355-356.

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perception when it was announced that Lafferty had been appointed to the faculty to direct the college's "typographical and stenographic department."[42] Professor Johnston, in an interview with a reporter from the New York Sun, tried to clear up the misunderstanding. "Now, what we intend is not to make journalists, to make men fit at once for the editorial chair. No," he was quoted as saying in a Sun article. "But we wish to give young men as good an education as possible, in order that afterward, having acquired their journalistic training in a newspaper office, they may make far better and more cultivated editors." In the text of the same article the reporter admitted that Johnston's explanation "put the matter in a different light from what I had seen it before."[43] In 1875 Washington and Lee's acting president, J.J. White, made the explanation even more plain in a letter to Wingate when he wrote that, "There has never been any prescribed course" in journalism at the college and that the object of the scholarships was only to provide a general education to students who someday may want to become journalists.[44] But by 1875, it was already too late for explanations.

Aspirations of the First Journalism Students

Soon after the flyers announcing the journalism scholarships were distributed, a steady stream of letters flowed into Lexington that were addressed to Lee, members of the faculty or the board of trustees from prospective students or people recommending them. The letters are 125 years old, but they display a mixture of pride and enthusiasm that very much resembles

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[42]No such department ever existed at the college, but the mention of such a department implied that classroom studies of journalism were offered. See "Letter from Lexington," Richmond Dispatch, 21 October 1869, p. 4.

[43]"General Lee's College."

[44]J.J. White letter to Chas F. Wingate, New York City, 25 May 1875, as quoted in Wingate, p. 360.

the same feelings felt by many of the more ambitious and idealistic college journalism and mass communication students of today.

Even a week before the flyers were mailed, a Clarksville, Va. resident, N. T. Worton, wrote to say he heard of the program from a newspaper article and expressed the hope that all the scholarships had not already been taken.[45]

A common theme among the letters was hope. Some of the letter writers admitted to coming from very poor backgrounds and saw that a journalism scholarship was their only chance of receiving an education. Seventeen-year-old P.J. Stinson of St. Louis, Mo. bragged that he could set type at a rate of 1,000 ems an hour. If he could be awarded a scholarship, he reasoned, "I believe I could set enough type two or three hours each day as would pay for my board. I can set a clean proof, and as far as setting type is concerned consider myself equal to the majority of journeymen."[46] William Chaffee Ivey of Clarendon County, S.C. wrote that he had worked in several printshops but needed a scholarship "on account of having a mother and several small brothers to support and having no way to do it by by laborious work and I hope that you can assist me in getting an education. I now find need of it."[47] Henry Kyd Douglas, a Hagerstown, Md. attorney, wrote letters to a faculty member, the Board of Trustees and the college rector in support of M.W. Boyd, who hoped to transfer to Washington College from St. John's College. Douglas pointed out that Boyd's father was a Baltimore printer who fought gallantly for the Confederate army and lost all his possessions. The son had gained some

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[45]N.T. Worton letter to J.M. Leech, 12 August 1869. Leech was Washington College's librarian.

[46]P.J. Stinson letter to William Preston Johnston, 30 August 1869.

[47]Wm. Chaffee Ivey letter to J. Leech, 20 September 1869.

experience in his father's printshop, and his father, who had since become the editor of a Hagerstown newspaper, hoped his son could get a sound education in order to succeed him as editor.[48] One prospective student who had already been awarded a scholarship wrote that he was forced to abandon his plan to enroll at Washington College because even with the scholarship he was still too poor to attend. "Nothing but this sufficient and lamentable cause impels me to a course so regretful," he wrote.[49]

Prospective students were not limited to former printing apprentices. E.L. Jones of Conwayboro, S.C., a private bill collector, wrote that "I am very desirous of quitting my present business and trying to educate myself for (the) Jour(nalism) profession."[50] Henry D. Leon of Augusta, Ga. arrived on the Washington College campus carrying a letter of recommendation from his hometown's typographical union. The letter admitted that Leon had no printing experience, but his brother was a printer and the union was confident that Leon "will tower above all his competitors there if industry, appliance and energy can accomplish so desirable a result."[51]

Some letter writers mixed their comments with personal flattery of Lee and requests for special favors.[52]

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[48]Henry Kyd Douglas letters to the Washington College Board of Trustees, to J.W. Brockenbrough and to William Allan, all on 10 September 1869. Brockenrough was college rector and Allan was a mathematics faculty member.

[49]S. H. Homan letter to the faculty, 9 October 1869.

[50]E. L. Jones letter to J. M. Leech, 5 October 1869.

[51]L. Parrish Ashly letter to William Preston Johnston, 3 November 1869.

[52]See Crenshaw, pp. 615-619, for a selection of letters addressed to Lee. One veteran printer told Lee he considered him a second George Washington. Another experienced printer asked Lee to help him find a job in a warmer climate.

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Some unions expressed doubt that they could ever hope to find someone within their ranks that could meet the college's academic standards.[53] Other unions were grateful for the the opportunity to recommend a student and took the time to praise the school for creating such a program. The president of Richmond, Va. Typographical Union No. 90 called the scholarships, "a great and glorious work."[54] Union No. 90 was so proud of the student it had recommended for the scholarship, Charles W. Clemmitt, that it regularly monitored his progress.[55] John Plaxton of the Nashville, Tenn. Union No. 20 wrote to send regrets that his union could not recommend a student at the time but still desired to thank the college for the gesture. Plaxton used the opportunity to give the program one of its most glowing endorsements:

> We look upon this action of Washington College as a very important step toward raising American journalism from the slough of venality, corruption, and party subserviency into which it has too notoriously fallen to the high position it should occupy. It has been truly said that the press is a reflex of the popular mind; and we think it may be made more—a moulder of that mind. Then how imperatively necessary that it should be pure in sentiment, and elevated and dignified in character. Washington College has taken a step in the right direction, the wisdom of which will be more and more apparent as the country reaps the benefits of this farseeing liberality in the purified and healthy tone of its press.[56]

Lessons for Journalism and Mass Communication Education

Journalism education did not die when Washington and Lee University shut down its

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[53]Crenshaw, 617.

[54]J. T. Vannerson letter to William Preston Johnston, 7 September 1869.

[55]The Richmond Dispatch carried a notice in its 21 October 1869 edition that Clemmitt was "winning golden opinions from his professor and his fellow students." Earlier the Richmond Enquirer printed a short article announcing Clemmitt's selection as a scholarship recipient (as quoted by the Virginia Gazette, 15 September 1869, p. 2).

[56]John Plaxton letter to William Preston Johnston, 6 September 1869.

program in the late 1870s. Less than fifty years after the press scholarships were dropped, students were studying journalism at more than two hundred colleges and universities across America.[57] The list even included Washington and Lee University, which brought back journalism in 1925.

Based on such evidence, it would be easy to merely conclude that journalism education was simply an idea that was ahead of its time in 1869 and that Washington College's journalism program was just a beginning and not a failure.

But Washington College's experience with journalism education is worthy of closer examination.

In carrying out their program, Lee, Johnston and the rest of the faculty clearly exhibited an attention to careful planning, moral considerations and knowledge of the press. They could not offer a standard classroom-oriented course in journalism with any sense of rigor or credibility. They had no faculty with extensive experience in journalism. No journalism textbooks were in existence. They saw no point in allocating funds to equip the school with a suitable newsroom/laboratory, which by nineteenth century standards would have had to be a printshop. They could have set up courses in journalism that would have consisted of discussion or lectures only, as Yale, Cornell and Missouri did later in the 1870s. They could have built a printshop on campus using student labor to set up a publicity operation for the college that could masquerade as a campus newspaper or even a major in journalism like many small colleges across America did in the twentieth century.

The essence of the Washington College journalism program was an assumption that the press of the South would be best served if it had available to it a strong pool of intelligent, moral

[57]"Editorials," Journalism Quarterly 3 (November 1926): 15.

and generally competent individuals. They realized that training in printing techniques had to be conducted in well-equipped printing houses under master printers. Some attributes that set editors apart from typesetters, compositors and press operators were writing ability, public affairs knowledge, legal and ethical principles and communication skills. General college curricula could handle much of this kind of training at the time because few specialized reporting and newswriting procedures had become standardized journalistic practice.

Much of this kind of thinking is very much alive in today's journalism and mass communication education. Modern journalism students do not study journalism exclusively; they are required to take a wide range of general education subjects and take only one or two courses in their major field each semester, and some schools allow no journalism courses to be taken during the freshman or sophomore years. Washington College's program bears a remarkable resemblance to modern arrangements in that the first students were to devote only one hour per day in the printshop, close to the equivalent of a single course in journalism each semester. And it is clear that steps were taken to avoid abuse of the daily hour in the printshop because much of the college literature specifically mentioned that students would work their hour only "when required," with these words often italicized.

It is also important to note that students were to be paid for every hour they worked in the printshop; the money would be used for the students' board, and extra money earned was also to be given to the students.[58] This very admirable arrangement stands in stark contrast

[58]Instead of paying the college or the students directly for their daily hour, the Virginia Gazette may have had a standard tradeout agreement in which the college received free advertising in lieu of cash. This arrangement would have allowed the college to pay for the students' board with the $5,000 it had allocated for advertising the program. This could explain why the paper published an ad for the college which was one full column every week for a year. It also may be a sign of the apparent death of the journalism program when the weekly ad stopped in 1870.

to the many hours modern journalism students are known to put in for free volunteering to work on the staffs of campus newspapers, taking unpaid internships and accepting assignments from journalism instructors for which they receive no monetary compensation. Modern students, as well as many of their predecessors who majored in journalism this century, justify such activities because of the opportunity to receive experience and a byline, but in effect they are actually paying tuition to work for free. Many of the strongest modern journalism schools have specific policies that discourage such exploitation, but even at these schools students often take internships that pay very low wages because of the pressing need to show prospective employers that they have journalism experience.

Unlike Duff Green's plan, Washington College cooperated with unions, as well as newspapers and journalism organizations. This action won the college compliments from union members, who probably felt flattered that one of the nation's leading institutions of higher education was asking men with little formal education to nominate scholarship recipients.

But many newspaper editors were unimpressed and overly cynical, and it was their views that were printed in the leading mass medium of the day. New York newspapers probably felt that it could be especially appropriate to attack the program because it was taking place at the college presided over by Lee, the man responsible for the deaths of thousands of Union soldiers.[59] In general, the press was upset with the implication that college boys who had not paid their dues working for newspapers could become editors and that a college purported to know enough about the subject to be able to teach journalism. Modern

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[59]The full headline over the New York Sun's article on the program was "General Lee's College; The University of Secession Principles; Sentiments of the Students and Professors---Who the Former Are---The Latter's Antecedents---A Talk with Col. Johnston---Gen. Lee in his Seclusion---The Nursery of Secession Doctrines." Under this heading the journalism program looked like part of a crafty plot to start another war.

day attacks on journalism and mass communication schools are still largely based on these two fundamental points of contention. Washington College faculty expressed amazement with the criticism. They had set up the program to help elevate the standards of journalism, their faculty included a working editor to supervise the students, they placed stress on non-journalism courses, and they specifically indicated that their graduates were not going to be automatically ready for editor's jobs.[60] But the attacks never stopped even after journalism schools were established in the twentieth century—a tradition of harsh criticism that shows no signs of ever ceasing.

Washington and Lee is clearly deserving of a prominent place in the history of journalism and mass communication education in America. The university did not offer classes in journalism similar to the usual three credit hour 101-style college course characteristic of late twentieth century higher education. However, there can be no doubt that journalism was indeed a class offered at Washington and Lee, but in a mid-nineteenth century context. It was a specific interest in journalism that attracted a group of young men to Washington and Lee; they identified themselves as students of journalism, they had to fulfill prerequisites and daily requirements just like their contemporaries in other disciplines, and their classroom environment was state of the art for this period in history. Washington and Lee's journalism class did not conclude with a classroom door swinging open at 10 minutes to the hour; instead, the class represented a collection of students who as a minimum requirement put in a full hour daily in the

[60]Lee personally held that formal education was only the beginning of real learning. Johnston tried reasoning with the New York Sun reporter—"It is like what we do for young men wishing to enter the ministry. We give them that education first, which every cultivated man must have, and then let them study as best they may for the pulpit. And don't you think they will make better ministers than if they did not have that education which we give them?" See "General Lee's College."

workplace. This type of effort is far more notable than a mere early attempt to train printers.

What is even more prominent is that a preview of the challenges to come for journalism and mass communication education was present at Washington College in 1869-70. The college exhibited a strong preference for the study of the liberal arts and limited journalistic work for its students—very much like the standards of the modern Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication. The appropriateness of this practice is still hotly debated by educators, administrators and media critics. Along the way Washington and Lee also had to grapple with questions concerning what should be the role of internships, just what should journalism students be learning and how to deal with the constant criticism of the media. Journalism and mass communication educators today are still grappling with these kinds of questions—just like their predecessors were 125 years ago at Washington College.

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*** All letters, catalogues, meeting minutes and editions of the Southern Collegian cited here were made available courtesy of Special Collections, James G. Leyburn Library, Washington and Lee University, Lexington, Va.**